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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY USSR

SUBJECT

Sanitation and Disease in Rural Areas/ Life
Expectancy in Concentration Camps/Military Physical
Standards/Effect of Famine of Early ThirtiesPLACE
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1.

The people do not realize how bad their health is because they know only
what they are told, and they are told that most of the rest of the world
is in misery compared with themselves.

their diet, living space, and
sanitary conditions are vastly inferior to the European and American average,
these deficiencies are directly responsible for most of their
health problems.

the people get plenty of medical instruction and know how to make
the best of their fundamentally bad health conditions. Medical students spend
a great deal of time giving first-aid classes at factories and collective
farms and granting medals to successful graduates of courses in "sanitary
defense".

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4.

[redacted] a man entering a European camp at age 25 could expect to live about ten years. An older man, say 40, would not last more than five or six years. The harshness of the Siberian climate makes life-expectancy in Siberian camps somewhat less than in the others.

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5.

Physical standards were exceedingly low prior to World War II. Only the grossest physical defects kept a man out of the army. The best physical specimens were sent to the Air Force, the Navy and the tank corps, and the infantry got the worst. Between 1939 and 1941 physical standards were lowered still further. Virtually everyone who could stand up was taken into the Army.

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6.

[redacted] the famine of the early thirties affected those born during this period and those in the development stage [redacted]

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in general, the health of that age group has been greatly impaired. It is an age group characterized by a very high incidence of TB and rickets and lowered resistance to all infectious diseases. The life expectancy of the members of this age group has certainly been reduced although [redacted] it is still too early to determine to what extent new drugs might offset this on an absolute basis. Relative to the rest of the population, this generation is inferior, however.

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7.

[redacted] sanitary conditions in the rural areas [redacted]

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In the cities throughout all of the USSR [redacted]

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[redacted] garbage is collected regularly by a tax-supported municipal service. This garbage is burned. In the small towns and villages, every dwelling has a garbage hole in the backyard into which the garbage is dropped. When the hole is filled, it is covered up and a new hole is dug. As a result, there is a pervasive garbage smell in the rural areas. One becomes unpleasantly aware of this smell at a distance of about three miles from every city. In the cities of 200 thousand and over, most of the dwellings have flush toilets. Outhouses are the rule in smaller cities and, without exception, in the towns and villages. Holes of about eight feet in depth are dug inside the outhouses. Where the ground is sandy, the holes are partly lined with stone. A family of four will fill one of these holes in about a year and then the waste, which has by this time turned to water, is scooped out in buckets and disposed of in the nearest river or stream. Young children not infrequently fall into these holes and drown.

8.

[redacted] sources of supply of drinking water in these areas [redacted]

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Drinking water in the large towns and cities is chlorinated and piped in from reservoirs. In the largest and most modern cities, a large percentage of the dwellings are directly supplied. In the smaller and more neglected cities the water is piped to public hydrants of which there is one for about

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every ten blocks. The smaller towns and villages have seen practically no change in their water supply during the more than thirty years of Soviet rule. These smaller communities receive their drinking water now, as they have for centuries, from the nearest mountain streams. This water is not purified and in most places it is brought into the community through pipes connected directly to the streams. There is frequently only one outlet for the whole town or village. Women by the dozens, and sometimes by the hundreds, carry their washing long distances to the water spouts and do their work there. In view of the untreated water which the villagers get, the incidence of disease attributable to impure water is somewhat less than might be expected.

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factors in the transmission of these diseases

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Most of the USSR is crawling with lice, and typhus is the most prevalent disease in the rural areas. Typhus is also endemic in the cities, and almost every Soviet citizen has had the disease as a child. Tuberculosis is the second most prevalent disease in the rural areas and poor diet is the major reason for its high incidence. Typhoid epidemics occasionally break out in rural areas, especially along the border of Mongolia, but the disease has been brought fairly well under control. In northern Siberia, severe virus colds, frequently fatal, are endemic. In the rural areas of the USSR, as in the cities, scarlet fever and diphtheria have been almost eliminated through school immunization programs.

10

typical rural houses and associated outbuildings

The typical rural dwelling in the USSR is very small, consisting of only a kitchen and one other room. The kitchen serves as the bedroom, dining room, and living room. The other room is used for visitors and for the isolation of sick family members. This room, when not in use, is closed off during the winter to conserve heat. In the rural areas along the Turkish and Iranian borders, animals sometimes share these tiny houses with the people and sleep on the kitchen floor while the humans sleep on the large stove. Cement is virtually unknown in the rural dwellings of the USSR. The houses are built of stone, earth, and chopped straw. Ventilation is terrible, and is usually provided only by a small hole in the roof, covered in bad weather by a piece of glass. The outhouse is normally the only associated building of a rural house and these are built of wood in all areas where wood is available. Where wood is not available, such as in parts of the Caucasus, the outhouses are of earth, stone and straw. One of the more miserable aspects of rural life in these woodless areas is that cow manure, elaborately prepared, is the only fuel.

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11.

settlements

The properties were clustered together in villages ranging from, roughly, 50 to 300 family units. In the northern Caucasus about 50 houses to a settlement is generally the case. Farther north, 250-300 houses per village is the average.

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